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Request for the inclusion of an item in the provisional agenda of the sixty-ninth session

Observer status for the Pacific Community in the General Assembly

Letter dated 25 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Pursuant to rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour to request the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly of an item entitled "Observer status for the Pacific Community in the General Assembly".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I attach an explanatory memorandum (see annex I) and a draft resolution (see annex II).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Peter **Thomson**
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Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations

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Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

1. The Pacific Community fulfils the legal criteria for permanent observer status in the General Assembly

In its decision 49/426, adopted without a vote, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Sixth Committee, and taking note of the oral report presented to the Sixth Committee on 25 November 1994 by the Chair of the Working Group on the question of criteria for the granting of observer status in the Assembly, decided that the granting of observer status in the Assembly should in future be confined to States and to those intergovernmental organizations whose activities cover matters of interest to the Assembly.

The Pacific Community is an independent intergovernmental organization established on 6 February 1947 by the Agreement establishing the South Pacific Commission[1] (the Canberra Agreement). The organization has its headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia, regional offices in Suva, Fiji, and Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, together with a country office in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Created as a vehicle for fostering cooperation, integration and development in the Pacific region in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Community has evolved into a scientific and technical knowledge-based development organization. According to the Canberra Agreement, the object and purpose of the Community are:

(a) To study, formulate and recommend measures for the development of, and where necessary the coordination of services affecting, the economic and social rights and welfare of the inhabitants of the countries and territories within the scope of the Community, particularly in respect of agriculture (including animal husbandry), communications, transport, fisheries, forestry, industry, labour, marketing, production, trade and finance, public works, education, health, housing and social welfare;

(b) To provide for and facilitate research in technical, scientific, economic and social fields in the countries and territories within the scope of the Community and to ensure the maximum cooperation and coordination of the activities of research bodies;

(c) To make recommendations for the coordination of local projects in any of the fields mentioned in the previous subparagraphs which have regional significance and for the provision of technological assistance from a wider field not otherwise available to a member country or territory;

(d) To provide technical assistance, advice and information (including statistical and other material) for the participating Governments;

[1] The organization's name was formally changed from "South Pacific Commission "to "Pacific Community" in 1997, in order to reflect the Community's expanded membership covering countries and territories in both the North and South Pacific. The legal effect of this name change was confirmed by a resolution of the eighth Conference of the Pacific Community, adopted on 18 November 2013.

(e) To promote cooperation with non-participating Governments and with non-governmental organizations of a public or quasi-public character having common interests in the area, in matters within the competence of the Community;

(f) To address inquiries to the participating Governments on matters within its competence;

(g) To make recommendations with regard to the establishment and activities of auxiliary and subsidiary bodies.

In this context, the Community's mandate is essentially unlimited in terms of sectoral content. However, in the light of the critical need to work cooperatively, avoiding activities that either duplicate, or infringe on, the role of other regional and international agencies active in the Pacific, the organization has focused its work, which aims to help Pacific peoples to achieve their development goals, on sectors where it has a particular depth of expertise and thus a comparative advantage.

The sectors currently covered by the Community include agriculture, aquaculture, culture, education, energy, fisheries, forestry, gender issues, geosciences, health, information and communications technology, infrastructure planning and assessment, media development, transport (maritime and aviation), statistics and demography, water and sanitation and youth. Much of the Community's work also addresses cross-cutting areas including climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, food security, human rights and policy analysis and advice. In all the aforementioned sectors and areas, the Community provides knowledge-based, technical advice to support the development efforts of the countries that it serves.

2. Membership

From its inception in 1947 with 6 founding members,[2] the Community's membership has expanded to 26, embracing 22 Pacific Island countries and territories and the 4 remaining founding members:[3] American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.

The Community's membership includes both sovereign States and non-sovereign territories.[4]

With the exception of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 1994 and again in 2004, the membership of the Community has remained stable since 1983. Interest in membership and other forms of

[2] Australia, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

[3] The Netherlands withdrew in 1962. The United Kingdom withdrew in 1994, rejoined in 1998 and withdrew again in 2004.

[4] All countries and territories were recognized as equal members of the organization by a resolution of the twenty-third South Pacific Conference, held in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, in 1983. The eighth Conference of the Pacific Community, held on 18 and 19 November 2013, reaffirmed by resolution the equal membership status of all current members of the Community.

partnership with the Community has, however, grown over the past decade. In the light of the expressions of interest received for full membership, associate membership, observer status and other forms of partnership, the eighth Conference of the Pacific Community, held on 18 and 19 November 2013, mandated the secretariat, in conjunction with a working group, to develop an expanded policy on membership and observer status in order to accommodate such requests. In the short term, such provisions will allow the Community to further discussions already under way with Timor-Leste and the European Union on the issue of membership of the organization.

The organization is financed by annual contributions from its member States and territories, together with funds received from external donors, partners and stakeholders for specific programmes and/or projects.

3. Institutions and structure

The Community has a three-tiered structure composed of a secretariat, the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations and the Conference of the Pacific Community.

The ultimate decision-making body of the organization is the Conference of the Pacific Community, which meets every two years. The Conference is charged with establishing the policies and regulations of the organization, either on its own behalf or in response to recommendations for change submitted by the secretariat through the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations. Conference resolutions can be legally binding on members, while its recommendations are an expression of the political will of members to implement certain policies. The Conference also appoints the Director General of the organization and evaluates his or her performance. The Conference is the sole body within the Community with the power to decide on applications for membership of the organization.

In years in which the Conference does not meet, the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations, a committee of the whole of the Conference, meets to decide on the Community's work programme and governance issues.

The secretariat is the executive organ of the organization and is responsible for carrying out its programme of work from day to day. It is headed by a director general, who is appointed by the Conference. The Director General is assisted by a team of around 660 international civil servants and supporting staff. The secretariat operates in two official languages: English and French.

The secretariat is structured into an operations and management directorate, headed by a deputy director general, and a programmes directorate, also headed by a deputy director general. A third deputy director general represents the Director General at the Suva Regional Office in Fiji.

The Operations and Management Directorate is responsible for all of the organization's corporate services: administration, finance, human resources, information and communication technology, interpretation and translation, library and publications. The North Pacific Regional Office, based in the Federated States of Micronesia, and its country office in Solomon Islands are also part of the Directorate.

The secretariat carries out the work of the Community through seven specialized divisions within its Programmes Directorate dealing with:

(a) Applied geosciences and technology;

(b) Education, training and human development;

(c) Economic development;

(d) Fisheries, aquaculture and marine ecosystems;

(e) Land resources;

(f) Public health;

(g) Statistics for development.

The stand-alone Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility provides support across all the secretariat's activities, with a particular focus on member priorities and strategic engagement at the regional and international levels by means of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation with members, donor partners and other stakeholders.

4. Mutual advantages of the Community being granted observer status in the General Assembly

The various activities of the organization advance in a practical manner many of the objectives and purposes of the United Nations, in particular as regards current challenges in international development and the post-2015 development agenda.

In its programme of work for the coming years, the Community remains focused on helping Pacific peoples to achieve their development goals and ensuring that the challenges faced by Pacific Island countries and territories are taken into account in the international development agenda. Given the central role that the Community will play in the Pacific, both in helping to shape the region's response to the post-2015 development agenda and in implementing the agenda in-country, increased exchange with the General Assembly would be mutually beneficial.

Numerous United Nations agencies and bodies (such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization and the World Health Organization) participate in Community activities, either as observers, co-organizers, partners or on the basis of invitations to attend particular meetings.

In the light of the degree of cooperation that already exists between the Community and United Nations agencies and bodies, and taking into account the Community's broad development mandate in the Pacific region, observer status in the General Assembly would both consolidate links between the United Nations and the Community and facilitate opportunities for greater mutually beneficial cooperation in the future.

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer status for the Pacific Community in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Community,

1. *Decides* to invite the Pacific Community to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the action necessary to implement the present resolution.